

# Inspiring True Competence in Your Adolescent

Competence is “having the necessary ability, knowledge or skill to do something successfully.” True competence is ability rooted in experience. We only build competence by mastering tasks and facing challenges. In order to become competent in any skill we have to experience failure. No one gets it right on the first try every time. This is how we build tenacity and the ability to “stick with it.”

In our enthusiasm to provide the best opportunities for our children, we can forget that they each have unique skills and abilities. Not every person has the ability to achieve every goal they imagine for themselves. If you have more than one child, they may have very different skills and abilities and it may be unrealistic to have the same expectations for competence for all of your children. We don’t all have the ability to compete at the Olympic level and many of us will never get an A on a calculus test...no matter how hard we try or how long we study. But each of us has the ability to do great things and achieve success. It is our job, as parents, to help our children set and reach realistic goals that challenge them to be successful using their individual strengths and talents. Parents can become so focused on helping their child become the star of the sports team, the next American Idol or the class valedictorian that they lose track of their child’s true competence and abilities.

Competence is the foundation of resilience. Without genuine competence, it can be difficult to build other skills of resilience like confidence, character, control or coping. What can parents do to help their children to become competent? It’s important for us to encourage our children, but that doesn’t mean we should offer empty praise. Find your child’s strengths and help him/her build those strengths. More importantly, help them begin to recognize their strengths on their own. The way to do this is not by lecturing and telling them what they should be doing or pointing out all that they did wrong. The most effective way to help our children build competence is to ask the type of questions that will help them begin to see those things on their own. Lead them to recognize their own accomplishments and find their reward in the personal growth and the experience instead of the trophy or the grade that they might receive. When an individual begins to experience true competence, he/she is challenged to try new things and expand their abilities. Building true competence actually empowers our children to grow and set more challenging goals for themselves.

**Competence**  
A specific range of skill, knowledge, ability to do something successfully being adequately or well qualified in the condition of being capable to meet demands, requirements

**Questions to ask yourself about competence**

1. What skills are necessary to become competent at my objective?
2. Do I have those skills?
3. Can I develop those skills?
4. If I can, what can I do to develop those skills?
5. If not, is there some other goal I can choose?

**POWER SURGE Challenge:**  
Choose something that you would like to become competent at. Ask yourself these 5 questions about your goal and then make a plan!

## Tech Tips for Parents: Keep Learning!

Just as we encourage our children to be “lifelong learners” we need to be able to model that skill for them...especially when it comes to technology. We need to be proactive in our approach to the technology and devices that our children are using. We may never become as proficient as they are, but we need to continue to learn so that we can effectively parent them and keep them safe. Use these Tech Tips to help you become a lifelong technology learner:

- \* Use it. Develop a basic knowledge of all of your child’s devices. Turn them on, use them, know what each one is used for and what each of the “apps” is and what it does. You can even have your child be your teacher!
- \* Check it. Know the passwords for all devices and check them regularly to make sure that your child is being responsible. This is not a violation of privacy, this is a safety issue. Just as you wouldn’t allow your child to walk into dangerous places, you don’t want them to spend time in dangerous virtual locations either.
- \* Learn it. If you are unsure about your child’s devices, take a class. Local libraries provide classes and training and many retail stores provide training for the devices they sell.
- \* “Google” it. Use a search site to ask questions you might have about technology. You should be able to find a video or website to answer your question or teach you new ways to use the device.

## October Prevention Principle

True competence builds tenacity and diminishes stress.

### Conversations that Count

Competence means having the ability, knowledge or skills to do something successfully. No person is competent at everything. Sometimes, you can become competent by working hard, learning skills and practicing. We should always try to be OUR best, but we are not always going to be THE best. It’s important to recognize that each member of your family may not be competent at all of the same things. [Knowledge is Power](#) is this month’s [PowerTalk](#) activity. Use the inventory to guide you as you learn to evaluate each family member’s competence and work together to build or strengthen skills in each other.